

Preliminary Ten-Week Brood Survey Results, 2006

By Brian Dhuey

Most of the state had warm and dry conditions throughout the early brood rearing period during the summer of 2006. Many areas of the state had large and/or frequent rain events later in the brood rearing season. These came late, when chicks are larger and better able to handle the weather. Brood rearing conditions for the summer of 2006 should be considered to be average to above average for most of the state.

DNR field personnel were asked to report the number and size of game bird broods observed from 11 June through 19 August during their normal working hours. At the end of the survey period, brood reports were then summarized and compiled by the wildlife surveys program.

Turkeys showed a 39% increase in the number of broods seen per observer and little change in the size of the broods seen (+2%). In 2006, DNR field personnel averaged 4.3 turkey broods seen during the survey period. In 2005, field personnel averaged 3.1 turkey broods seen. The average size of a brood seen in 2006 was 5.2 young per brood, while in 2005 the average brood size was 5.1 young per brood. Turkeys have been expanding their range in Wisconsin ever since their reintroduction and subsequent restocking in all suitable habitats in the state, and continue to increase in number and inhabit new parts of the state in ever increasing numbers.

Pheasants showed a decline in the number of broods seen from 2005 levels. The number of broods seen per observer was down 25% while the average size of the brood was essentially unchanged at -2%. The Rural Mail Carrier survey and the Spring Breeding Pheasant survey also showed a slight decrease in the number of breeding pheasants in the spring of 2006. Pheasant numbers should be down a little compared to last falls hunting season.

Ruffed grouse showed the largest increase, with the number of broods per observer rising 87% from 2005 levels. This was expected, as the number of breeding males counted on the statewide spring drumming survey was up 27% from the previous year. The average size of the broods seen was 4.7 young per brood in 2006. This was exactly the same as in 2005. It would appear that ruffed grouse are now beginning their population climb out of their cyclic low.

Gray Partridge showed a decrease in the number of broods observed in 2006, and are well below the historic highs of this spirited little game bird that occurred during the 1960's and 1970's. Brood sizes were down from the previous year also.

2005-06 Ten-Week Brood Survey, broods seen per observer and average brood size.

	2005 Broods / Observer	2005 Average Brood Size	2006 Broods / Observer	2006 Average Brood Size
Turkey	3.13	5.1	4.35	5.2
Pheasant	0.57	4.9	0.43	4.8
Ruffed Grouse	0.47	4.7	0.88	4.7
Gray Partridge	0.03	4.0	0.01	3.0